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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY FOR MARCH 15, 2007

This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for March 15, 2007. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICAL

EVRENSEL: The representatives of Gundem daily, whose publication was banned for one month last week, will hold a press announcement tomorrow. The venue of the press announcement was not specified by the daily.

RADIKAL / EVRENSEL: The police conducted an unannounced raid at the Tunceli chapter of DTP yesterday. Police also conducted raids on the houses of DTP members and detained ten people. According to Radikal, a total of five people were detained. Radikal further stated that police conducted the raid as a result of tip-offs about PKK members making contact with DTP officials ahead of Newroz celebrations. DTP Tunceli chairperson condemned the raids, and the EMEP's (Party of Labor) party organization showed its reaction to the raids by paying a visit to DTP Tunceli chapter. Meanwhile, actions were reportedly brought against chairmen of DTP chapters in three western provinces for "praising the criminal acts and criminals."

EVRENSEL: The daily reports that "as some circles are trying to escalate tension before the Newroz celebrations," 76 applications have been lodged nationwide with authorities to get permission for this year's Newroz celebrations and preparations for Newroz were well under way. The Diyarbakir Newroz committee stated that some problems were experienced with their application process because of the non-Turkish "w" letter in the word Newroz used in the application documents. It is expected that Diyarbakir, Van and Batman will be able to celebrate Newroz on March 21. Committees in Igdir and Agri provinces were granted permission for March 21. The authorities overturned the application of the DTP in Tunceli because of the "w" letter in the documents and the committee had to reapply after revising the documents. The Deputy Chairperson of the Diyarbakir DTP said that they hoped to attract one million people to this year's celebrations in Diyarbakir.

HURRIYET (CUKUROVA): Adana Mayor Aytac Durak, who has served 19 years as Adana mayor, reportedly announced five months ago that he will not run again in the next elections. However, Durak startled everybody in town by stating that he will not leave the seat before completing the controversial light rail metro project which was launched twenty years ago. (This summary is from March 14 edition.)

CRIME / LAW ENFORCEMENT

SABAH (GUNEY): Jandarma teams conducted an anti-drug operation and searched a truck it stopped around Gaziantep's Nur Mountain area. The truck set off from Hakkari's Yuksekova district and teams found nearly 107 kilograms of heroin substance in hidden sections.

HURRIYET (CUKUROVA): Jandarma teams stopped and searched a truck that was traveling from Hakkari's Yuksekova district to Van. 35 kilograms of heroin was found in the hidden sections.

SABAH (GUNEY): Two of the security personnel of Cukurova University were caught as they were stealing two computers and office materials from the health unit of the university.

SABAH (GUNEY): Police conducted an anti-smuggling operation in Adana and seized 35,000 boxes of smuggled cigarettes. Smuggling and Organized Crime Branch of the Turkish Police stated that 150,000 boxes of smuggled cigarettes were seized in the last three months and 25 persons were apprehended in connection with smuggling activities.

SABAH (GUNEY): Upon receiving a tip-off that thieves would steal oil from the Ceyhan-Kirikkale pipeline that crosses the area near the Cicekli village of Adana, the police conducted an operation and caught six people who attempted to flee away.
CULTURE / SOCIETY / ENVIRONMENT

CUMHURİYET: When the family of a fifteen year old girl forced their daughter to marry a boy they selected in Diyarbakir, the girl objected and fought with her family. Later, in a row the girl had with her fianci, her fianci shot her legs seven times.

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The girl was hospitalized, her health is not life-threatening, and she is reportedly under police protection now.

BOLGE / EVRENSEL: Health service employees held demonstrations throughout Turkey against the policies of the government in the health sector. In Adana, under alliance of the chamber of doctors and some unions, health workers went on a strike for two hours in public health institutions. Only the personnel at emergency units continued working.

ZAMAN: The Turkish Foreign Ministry reportedly requested from Turkish Embassies throughout the world the names of members of Armenian Diaspora whom the Ministry could plan to invite to the March 29 opening of historical Armanian Akhdamar Church located on the Island Akhdamar of Van which has been a restored.

ZAMAN / BOLGE / EKSPRES: Mustafa Gulek, son of the deceased Secretary General of CHP in 1950s, was accredited as the

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Honorary Consul of the UK in Adana during a reception held at Hilton which the British Ambassador Nick Baird attended, as well. The other invitees of the reception were Deputy Adana Governor Abdullah, Adana Deputy Mayor, the US Consul to Adana, bureaucrats and businessmen.

GREEN